

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A method of growing at least one plant (1) in which a plant is positioned for growth in a first growth substrate (2) which has a first water uptake capacity and a first sinking time S1, and the first growth substrate is in fluid communication with a discrete second substrate (4) which is mineral wool which has a density of 40 to 100kg/m³ and which has a second water uptake capacity which is less than the first water uptake capacity and a second sinking time S2 and the value of S1 is greater than the value of S2, and during growth the second substrate is flooded with water at intervals.

2. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 in which the mineral wool has density in the range 50 to 80kg/m³, ~~preferably 55 to 65kg/m³.~~

3. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 in which the fibres of mineral wool have median thickness of 2 to 10 microns, ~~preferably 3 to 8 microns, more preferably 3 to 4 microns.~~

4. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 in which the mineral wool fibres have a substantially horizontal orientation.

5. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 in which the mineral wool is bonded with a hydrophilic binder.

6. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 in which at least one plant is grown under conditions of drought stress and/or nutrient stress.

7. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 in which the first growth substrate comprises peat, coir, soil, compost, ~~preferably peat.~~

8. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 which is a method of growing at least 10 plants and in which each is in a pot having a base having apertures and the second substrate is a layer of mineral wool which is contained in the pot and forms a barrier between the first growth substrate and the apertures.

9. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 which is a method of growing at least 10 plants in which each is grown in a pot containing the first growth substrate in fluid communication with the mineral wool and in which the same volume of water is taken up by the mineral wool in each pot and the layer of mineral wool in each pot of the same size has the same area and volume.

10. (Original) A plant growth environment, such as a filled pot (3), comprising a first growth substrate (2) which has a first water uptake capacity and a first sinking time S_1 , and the first growth substrate is in fluid communication with a discrete second substrate (4) which is mineral wool which has a density of 40 to 100kg/m³ and which has a second water uptake capacity which is less than the first water uptake capacity and a second sinking time S_2 and the value of S_1 is greater than the value of S_2 .

11. (New) The method according to claim 2 in which the mineral wool has density in the range 55 to 65kg/m³.

12. (New) The method according to claim 3 in which the fibres of mineral wool have medium thickness of 3 to 8 microns.

13. (New) The method according to claim 7 in which the first growth substrate comprises peat.

14. (New) A method of growing at least 10 plants in which each plant is positioned for growth in a first growth substrate (2) which has a first water uptake capacity and a first sinking time S_1 , and the first growth substrate is in fluid communication with a discrete second substrate (4) which is mineral wool which as a density of 50 to 80kg/m³ and which has a second water uptake capacity which is less than the first water uptake capacity and a second sinking time S_2 and the value of S_1 is greater than the value of S_2 , and during growth the second substrate is flooded with water at intervals such that the plants are grown under conditions of drought stress.

15. (New) The method of claim 14 in which the first growth substrate is peat.

16. (New) The method of claim 14 in which each plant is in a pot having a base having apertures and the second substrate is a layer of mineral wool which is contained in the pot and forms a barrier between the first growth substrate and the apertures.

17. (New) The method of claim 14 in which each plant is grown in a pot containing the first growth substrate in fluid communication with the mineral wool and in which the same volume of water is taken up by the mineral wool in each pot and the layer of mineral wool in each pot of the same size has the same area and volume.